

bring it on home

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/20038093) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/20038093>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Spider-Man (Tom Holland Movies)
Relationship:	Quentin Beck/Peter Parker
Additional Tags:	Established Relationship , Secret Identity , Double Life , Consent Issues , Alternate Universe - Canon , Secret Enemies AND Lovers , Beck is a Chaotic Force of Moral Ambiguity , Age Difference , Beck is in His Thirties , Peter is Nineteen
Stats:	Published: 2019-07-30 Completed: 2019-08-19 Chapters: 9/9 Words: 19634

bring it on home

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

Peter Parker was Spider-man.

His Peter Parker. His boyfriend. His scrawny, nerdy boyfriend, who couldn't open a pickle jar, was the same infuriating kid in spandex who threw him into the side of a fucking Macy's last week.

And maybe none of this would particularly matter if Beck, himself, wasn't Mysterio.

Chapter 1

Beck paced back and forth, back and forth, and then some more. Stopped, rubbed his hands down his face, and then resumed. He was no stranger to bad days. In fact, he was pretty much used to them. But this wasn't the same as the dry cleaners misplacing his good suit, or the food truck putting cilantro on his taco.

This was cosmically worse.

Peter Parker was Spider-man.

His Peter Parker. His boyfriend. His scrawny, nerdy boyfriend, who couldn't open a pickle jar, was the same infuriating kid in spandex who threw him into the side of a fucking Macy's last week.

The thing was, Beck didn't trust much, especially not tabloids, or the news, or off-hand rumors. But it wasn't any of those things that told him Spider-man's identity. It was what he trusted most—himself, his own eyes. He'd just got knocked down pretty good, enough that his helmet had cracked in the collision, and if he wanted to protect himself, his true self, that meant fleeing. Not that he was proud of it, but it was the most obvious solution. Clearly. And yeah, maybe Spider-man got a few good hits in, and he limped into a nondescript alley of his choosing to take a breather.

And maybe from the shadows, he saw Spider-man do the same, squatting down behind a totaled car and hanging his head while he panted.

And maybe he watched with rapt attention as Spider-man then reached behind his head and pulled off his mask.

And maybe the face revealed to him was uncomfortably familiar. A face that he'd seen nearly every day for years; and more recently, every morning when they woke tangled together in sheets.

And maybe none of this would particularly matter if Beck, himself, wasn't Mysterio. The villain to the hero. Spider-man's archnemesis.

"Fuck," Beck hissed under his breath, tugging at his hair. Then louder— "*Fuck!*"

He was going to have to kill his boyfriend.

He really should have seen it coming, in retrospect. Peter was smart, super smart, it was one of the things that drew him in the first place. But was he smart enough to land a high-profile internship at Stark Enterprise before he even graduated high school? Actually, yeah, he definitely was.

Still, Beck should have read the signs. He should have known something was up.

But he was only human, albeit a human with extraordinary powers that he rarely used for the good of the world, but human all the same. Peter's awkward charm hadn't left him unaffected, nor did his clumsy attempts at flirtation. That all seemed so long ago now, before Beck allowed the advances, and before he realized he was actually pretty fond of the kid.

Before he let Peter kiss him on the night of his eighteenth birthday, and before Peter eventually, inexplicably, moved his stuff into Beck's one-bedroom apartment.

Beck barely remembered a time when the cup on his sink didn't house two toothbrushes.

Now here he was, a year later, in this fucked up predicament.

He wasn't sure how long he'd been pacing, fumbling, and cursing under his breath when he heard the sound of rattling keys and the front door opening. Beck's heart seized in his chest and he froze in the middle of the living room, dropping his hands to his sides. He wasn't ready for this, strangely enough. The destruction of New York, the demolition of buildings, and peppered civilian casualties? Easy. This? Not so much.

He hadn't even put any thought into how he'd do it. This was all too sudden, he needed time to construct a master plan—

“So, you know how in the new Star Wars trailer—” Peter was already in a ramble before he even shrugged his jacket from his shoulders. No greeting, nothing, just mindless babble of his clearly inferior space-themed media. “Well, I read on—”

Beck shut him up with a kiss, pressing him up against the door. There was a surprised yelp muffled in his mouth, but Peter eventually relaxed into him, enough to open up. Just one kiss, Beck told himself, until he had to pull the trigger. The metaphorical trigger, of course. A real bullet would be too messy and hard to explain. He could work out the details later, right now he'd have this.

Luckily, Peter seemed too into it to ask questions. He scrambled for Beck's shoulders, hauling him closer, and returned the kiss in vigor. Beck let him, relishing every desperate little noise he made against his mouth until that wasn't enough either.

If this was the last time, better make it worth it. Right?

He felt Peter shiver under his touch as his hand trailed down his side to sneak under the hem of his shirt. His fingers roamed the expanse of his back where Peter arched from the door into him, breaking away to pant and gasp when Beck nudged a knee between his thighs. Already halfway to hard, he was almost jealous of that youthful stamina.

“Pete,” Beck groaned against his mouth. “You want this?”

“Yeah,” Peter whispered, starry-eyed and clouded. “Yeah, come on.”

Peter went effortlessly as Beck lifted him, immediately wrapping his legs around his waist and holding on, careful not to break their desperate kiss. He walked them back, bumping into the table, smiling when Peter laughed against his cheek, and then further into the hall, kicking open the bedroom door.

“Do you want *me*?” Beck tossed him down on the bed, not as gentle as he normally found himself, but enough to be interpreted as flirty or playful.

Peter didn't seem all that convinced. He stared up at him with an odd look of confusion, his hair already mussed, his shirt rucked up and his pants too tight around the zipper. He watched as Beck stripped himself of his own shirt, shucking off his pants in a haste. Peter didn't move at all.

“What's going on?”

Beck crawled onto the bed, hovering over him so that he was left with no choice but to press back into the mattress. He couldn't answer that, could he? To be honest, he wasn't sure he could. He didn't have a fucking clue what was going on, or what he was going to do after this—or *during*. That was a thought.

“Do you want me?” Beck asked again. This time he dipped down to kiss his cheek, and then his

forehead, his nose, and his lips. An odd sort of desperation crept upon him. Fuck, he just needed to hear it. “Pete, please.”

“Yeah, I want you,” Peter said, still confused. His face was pinched, trying to figure out this bizarre puzzle before him. Then, with a shaky and unsure breath— “Do *you* want *me*?”

Beck groaned. “Kid, you have no idea.”

And he didn’t, did he? In this room, there was no Mysterio. There was only Quentin Beck, and Peter Parker *liked* Quentin Beck. He *cupped* his cheek instead of punching it—and Beck let out a long, suffering sigh. That was nice.

Beck wasted little to no time, rushed in a way he hadn’t felt in a while; like Peter might disappear if he took too long. He knew now that Peter could take whatever he dished out, those little quirks he hated about Spider-man, his ability to bounce back, might come in handy here. Especially when he’s already up to two fingers working inside. No use in being gentle.

Peter didn’t look the least bit worried about it, way too worked up and eager for it. All those concerns seemed to be conveniently slipped from his mind as he watched Beck roll the condom on. A part of him wished to forgo that all together, now that he knew the kid’s immune system was built like a steel fortress. But, appearances, and all that.

Peter still gasped and pawed, and nails still bit into the meat of his shoulder when Beck pushed in. A needy sound rang in Beck’s ears, and it wasn’t until he saw Peter’s face, glassy-eyed and staring up at him, that he realized it came from his own treacherous mouth.

“You feel so good.” He hadn’t meant to say that. “I could do this forever.” He hadn’t meant to say that either.

“Yeah?” Peter challenged, rocking his hips up in an attempt to get things going. “Aren’t—*ahhh*—Aren’t really doing much.”

Beck gave a breathless laugh and sat back, saddling those slender legs on either side of him. He rolled his hips slow and torturous until Peter gasped and grabbed at the sheets, twisting them in his hands. It was fun sometimes to tease and draw it out, and as much as he wanted this to be one of those times, a fire sparked and burned in his gut. An ugly thought and a reminder of who was really beneath him.

Fuck.

His pace picked up, and so did the nagging voice in his head. Peter had to die. Spider-man had to die. Why the hell was he wasting so much time fucking him?

Peter threw his head back, his pretty mouth falling open in a wordless, soundless moan.

Oh, right. That was why.

(Who cared that Beck spent hours picking apart his brain while they laid in bed, half-naked, with Peter’s head on his chest? Or that Peter remembered his order at the coffee shop on the corner, and watched his favorite TV shows even though they were “old” and “outdated”? That the spacious Manhattan condo felt both empty and claustrophobic when Peter was out of town? Who cared? Beck didn’t.)

Beck stared at the line of Peter’s throat, bared to him, unmarred and unbruised and the perfect shape for his hand. He could do this. Right now, while Peter was distracted, and he was

comfortably buried to the hilt inside him. Poetic, in a way, right?

He trailed his fingertips lightly over Peter's neck, wrapped his hand around it and squeezed. *Fuck*. Oh, god, this was too much. This wasn't enough. Peter arched back, let out a whine, but he didn't try to pull him off. If anything, he welcomed it; a daring, heated gleam in his eyes and the slightest twitch of his lips.

Beck recognized it for what it was. Trust.

He squeezed harder, enough brute pressure that he heard the slightest pained gasp slip from Peter's lips. Beck watched him go red-faced and wide-eyed, but when Peter moved his hand, it wasn't to claw at the hold around his throat but to reach between them and take himself in hand.

Beck's elbows nearly buckled, his hand going slack. Peter let out a rushed, loud moan, hand working feverously while Beck's own touch turned gentle, soft, and caressing.

He looked down at watery eyes and pink, spit-slick lips tucked between teeth. Beck couldn't stand the sight of it, furious with himself for being unable to do the one thing he knew he needed to do. The one thing he spent countless, painful days physically *trying* to do as Mysterio.

Beck sat back, getting Peter's ankles in both hands, nearly bending him in half, holding him open, while he took out all Mysterio's frustrations in the form of brutal, unforgiving thrusts. His hand slid to Peter's thigh and he clamped down hard enough to leave bruises. Whether or not they would remain, that was to be determined.

Suddenly, he was filled with an overwhelming desire to see how far he could push; how much Peter could take what he knew he had to give. How much this soft, gentle boy compared to his athletic and sturdy alter-ego.

"*Quentin*," Peter whimpered. His body was pulled taut in a high arch, and Beck watched his hand fumble in quick, sloppy strokes. "Oh god, I'm gonna—I—"

"Come on." Beck knocked his hand away, replacing it with his own expert fist. He knew how the kid liked it. Focus on the head, twist a little here, squeeze a little there. "That's it," he encouraged. "Come on."

Peter came over his knuckles with a moan so sweet, Beck almost followed him. He worked him through it, his thrusts becoming slower but no less erratic. It was the picture of Peter panting and staring fondly up at him that did it. He pushed inside one last time, collapsing on top of the body beneath him.

They stayed like that, breathing each other in, until Beck finally rolled over to get a lungful of proper air, anything that wasn't mostly Peter's cologne and sweat. He wasn't sure how long they laid like that, half on top of each other, chests heaving.

"Wow," Peter said, finally breaking the silence. Beck rolled his head to the side to find him still staring up at the ceiling, but there was an unmistakably pleased grin on his face. "What was that for?"

He had about a million answers to that, but he settled on the one closest to the truth that he could muster.

"I just missed ya', kid."

Beck shuffled Peter into his arms, kissed the top of his head and rested his chin there. His gaze

stayed unfocused on the wall.

And, he would miss him, when the inevitable came to pass. For now? He'd take this.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

I *very* quickly edited this, because I told myself I would post tonight and it's now after 3 am and I am an impatient creature. Thank you all for your feedback so far! It is very touching. :')

Beck woke to something wet on his chest. Damp, hot, and breathing.

His eyes cracked open, bleary with sleep, only to find that Peter had given up his pillow entirely and apparently decided that Beck's chest was a better alternative. Not that he was in any shape to argue.

But— This was, under no circumstances, how it was all supposed to go.

The something wet turned out to be drool. Peter's mouth hung open in soft, quiet snores. Truly endearing in the worst way. They'd lost most of their clothes in the night, Beck stripped down to his underwear and Peter to the same, plus some stupid graphic tee with a chemistry pun. There was a leg slung over his waist, and when Beck craned his eyes to see, he found it peppered with bruises.

So much for that quick healing.

Against his better judgment, Beck ran a soothing hand over them, all the purple and fading spots. Peter shuffled in his sleep at the touch, nuzzling closer and finally shutting his mouth to let out a low, drowsy hum.

"Five more minutes," he mumbled, back asleep before Beck could answer.

They could have five more hours if they wanted. Neither of them had anywhere to be. Not yet, at least. Mysterio had a date with a city bank and about fifty drones, but that was tomorrow. Which, consequently, meant so did Peter.

Right now? Beck was content.

He tried to keep his eyes to the ceiling. Don't look at him. Don't. But his arm stayed crooked to stroke at Peter's hair.

Usually, mornings like this brought him a rare peace. A brief moment where he could pretend that they were a normal couple. In retrospect, it wasn't an easy thing to do once you knew your secret life had been infiltrated by the enemy. Or, enemy adjacent? Beck had a hard time thinking of Peter as anything other than the hero.

And could they really ever be normal when his boyfriend was literally half his age?

If he wasn't waiting around for Peter to figure out that he was Mysterio, he was definitely waiting around for him to realize nineteen was young and there was a big, big world out there.

Beck hugged him a little tighter, and when he chanced a glance downward, he found Peter looking up at him with heavy-lidded eyes.

“Breakfast,” Peter said; a proper good morning as any.

“Yeah?”

“Coffee.”

“Breakfast *and* coffee? Getting a little greedy,” Beck said seriously. Then, unlatched himself from Peter’s ironclad grip and gave him a little nudge. “Okay, up then. Come on.”

Peter whined and rolled back over, taking the blankets with him. He pretended to fall back asleep, and Beck climbed out of bed, standing with his arms crossed, waiting with an unamused, flat look.

(Never mind that he was immensely amused.)

One eye cracked open, and it was lucky thing that the blanket covered up the smarmy smirk Beck knew was there. Not really sure what he’d do if he saw it. Had he always been this insufferable? Or, was this Beck’s own special kind of hell? Forced to deal with Peter being *Peter* for all eternity.

Breakfast could wait.

Beck crawled back in bed, and Peter was on him in an instant. He got him to strip off that ridiculous graphic tee, and then kisses were planted on Beck’s chest, down his stomach, the dip of his hip and then—

“Oh, *fuck*.”

He felt Peter smile around him.

Peter winced when he sat down, and Beck couldn’t help but feel just a little smug about it, laughing into the rim of his mug.

“Rough night?”

After all this time, Peter’s ears still turned pink when teased. His lips twitched into a barely concealed smile and he looked away, arranging his bagel and coffee carefully on the cramped tabletop. “Shut up, man.”

Okay, so maybe Beck was more than a *little* smug.

They sat at the table in the far corner of the coffee shop, the one by the window with the flyers for local dogs up for adoption and the wobbly leg. Sometimes they liked to argue over what they would rename them. Peter usually won. His suggestions were always wildly ridiculous, and Beck couldn’t help but be enamored. There were times he wondered what it might be like to actually call one of those numbers, get a new addition to their house.

Some kind of semblance of normalcy.

Beck shook the notion from his head, and then shook the paper in his hands, straightening out the fragile pages. What the fuck was getting into him?

“I don’t know why you read that thing,” Peter said with a mouthful.

“It’s interesting.”

“It’s bullshit.”

Beck couldn’t argue with that. The Daily Bugle was a tabloid at best, chock-full of conspiracy theories and a weird obsession with Spider-man. It was entertaining though, and this issue just so happened to feature him on the cover. Well, not him, but Mysterio. The same thing, unfortunately.

The front page was a candid shot from some brave bystander during last week’s scuffle. It showcased Mysterio wielding some lights and lasers, targeting a lithe and nimble body swinging from the buildings. Before Beck knew the truth. His stomach turned a little at the thought.

He could have seriously hurt Peter. Beck then frowned. That was the point, wasn’t it?

“What does it say?”

“Nothing,” Beck hummed, taking another sip of coffee. A teasing smirk curled on his lips. “Just that Spider-man is super lame.”

Beck watched his features for any hint of a micro-expression that might confirm what he already knew. A nail in the coffin, so to speak. The kid was a terrible liar, always had been, but he doesn’t give away a thing. Pete just laughed like it’s the funniest joke he’d ever heard.

“Please tell me what it says about Mysterio then.”

“Oh, it says here that he’s charming and handsome—”

“He wears a fishbowl on his head.”

Beck dramatically folded the paper down so that he could properly see Peter’s face. No real malice there, only humor and a determined set to his brow while he licked cream cheese from his thumb.

“It’s not a fishbowl.”

“Looks like a fishbowl to me.”

“It’s a—” Beck sighed. Fuck, he really didn’t have a retort for that one. Might as well *try* to salvage his secret reputation. Not that there was much left to salvage. “Crystal ball?”

Peter made a face, that was equal part infuriating and adorable. “Oh god, that’s somehow worse.”

“How is that any worse than a spandex bodysuit?” He kept his voice light, amused, and hopefully free of the actual offense. This little brat. Now he could hear and see it, all Spider-man’s little quips and jabs. Beck wasn’t sure if he wanted to punch him or kiss him. Maybe both.

“Spandex is practical.” Peter reached over and plucked the newspaper from his hands, pointing a finger at the grainy photo of Mysterio for emphasis. “He wears a cape, Quentin.”

Okay, he drew the line at the cape. It was a nice cape! Custom crafted, impeccable detailing. It wasn’t like this was the first time Peter critiqued Mysterio’s choices, but still, all Beck could hear was Spider-man.

“Capes aren’t practical?”

“Not on like, *any* fundamental level,” Peter said in a voice too serious to be anything but joking. He gave a wry smile. “Spider-man on the other hand—”

“Is Tony Stark’s lapdog?” Beck snapped out a little more bitterly than intended. Maybe it came off as teasing. He then realized his mistake. “*Was* Tony Stark’s lapdog.”

Because yeah, Iron Man was dead. Stark was dead. Low blow, for sure, but it made him feel good.

Until it didn’t.

Peter’s wounded expression was a twist of the knife in his back. Right, he’d almost forgotten that Stark was his mentor. The one that made him into the hero he was today.

Bullshit, honestly.

The kid had more *goodness* running through his veins than Stark had disposable income.

“Whatever,” Peter mumbled, dismissive.

And Beck, he couldn’t help but needle. Call it a character flaw. “What do you care? It’s not like you’re Spider-man.” So nonchalant, anyone that heard would think he actually believed it.

The only thing *that* earned him was a glare. One that quickly softened into something else, something Beck couldn’t quite place. The kid could read him like a book, just unfortunately not the chapters that mattered. But right now? He was working something out.

Beck closed his eyes, took a deep breath in and exhaled. This conversation needed an exit, and quick, before the whole morning went to shambles.

He crumpled his napkin in his fist and cleared his throat, putting on his best smile. And, because he apparently had touchy subjects on the brain— “How’s work?”

Peter froze, eyes drifting up to stare across the table like a deer in the headlights.

It was at that moment that Beck understood his plight.

They didn’t talk about work. They didn’t talk about Stark Industries. Not since Tony Stark, the man himself, personally fired him for being...What was it? *Unstable*.

Which, of course, worked as a genius little cover-up and excuse for his life’s work to be packaged and used as a personal therapy machine.

Peter had stayed, and his internship had morphed into a job.

Beck was happy for him. Honestly. It wasn’t like he burned up at the mere thought. It wasn’t like the realization that his boyfriend was Stark’s former plucky sidekick didn’t make him see red.

He was perfectly calm. Perfectly stable.

“It’s good.” It was answered with an evident hesitation, a tone that was as much somber as it was concerned.

And that was apparently all he had to say about the subject. Probably for the best.

“Good,” he answered, mouth dry.

Peter reached across the table and curled his fingers around Beck's wrist. Beck hadn't even realized he'd been shaking. "Quentin, hey. Is everything okay?"

"Yeah." He let out a sigh and shook off Peter's touch, even though it anchored him in some sort of coherency. "I'm fine."

Oh, he absolutely wasn't fine. Not in the slightest.

Peter smiled.

Okay, maybe he was a little fine.

"Are you just tired?" Peter raised his eyebrows suggestively. This fucking dork. Always knew how to crack him. "I swear I have bruises that have bruises."

"Sorry, kid," Beck said. He wasn't, and Peter knew it. "I'll go easy on you next time."

"Please. Don't."

Beck grinned, shark-like. He didn't have any set intentions on it anyway but seeing that joyful look in Peter's eye sealed the deal. God, how many times had Beck been overly gentle, trying not to break him? Not knowing at all he that could take punch, after punch. Peter probably craved something rough and vicious.

They finished their breakfast of coffee and bagels in relative silence. Every now and then, Peter would run his foot along Beck's calf, or reach out and pat his hand. Small, stolen moments that he took for granted too often.

It was good, what they had. But, like most things in Beck's life, it was also an illusion.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You go right, you go left.” Beck lazily flicked his wrists; the drones cloaked themselves and obeyed. Only two. No need for an entire arsenal for one petty bank robbery. Right?

Right.

They were pretty impressive pieces of machine, if he had to say. He built them himself, equipped them with the reconstructed code of his stolen technology and some heavy artillery. Stark couldn't take everything away. He could fire him, slap the Stark name on his life's work, but he'd never fully understood the true metaphysical relationship Beck had over his creations.

Reality was what he made it. The illusions all real, and thanks to the drones, the damage could be too.

And so, Beck had made a simple plan. Recoup, rebuild, revenge. In that order.

Sure, Stark was dead and Mysterio's terror had done enough damage to quench that particular thirst about ten times over, but he found he had a taste for it. Why stop there? It was fun. He delighted in it. This was who he was when he put on the helmet and cape, just like Spider-man. A shame that Peter couldn't see Beck's reasoning or come around to his way of thinking.

Maybe that irritated him most of all. He knew that Peter was extraordinary. He knew it from the moment he met him. Youthful and smart, but completely lost. So eager to prove his worth and without a proper outlet to do so.

But— *Peter as Spider-man*? The wasted potential.

That was the problem with these so-called collaborative efforts of super-heroes. Where was the ambition? Always doing for others and never doing for yourself.

Beck— no, he was in costume— *Mysterio* watched from his perch on the building ledge. His drones approached the bank, invisible to the naked eye and cloaked in the illusion of his choosing. In this case, a nonsuspicious man and woman. The mission was simple, pretty cut and dry, and if he pulled it off, they'd have rent paid for six months or more.

Maybe he'd take Peter out somewhere nice.

“You know, it's hard to be subtle when you're brooding on a rooftop.”

Maybe not.

The web hit him in the back before he could dodge it, yanking him back and to the concrete roof. Fuck. Peter had said he was visiting a friend. That lying little—

Beck twisted around, throwing out a hand to cast an illusion. His drones were preoccupied, but this would be enough of a distraction. Throw Spider-man off his game long enough for this to go smoothly.

The world around them shifted, turning black and cold, only a mist at their feet. Peter stumbled;

the change of scenery always gave him whiplash. And, fuck he really had to stop thinking of Spider-man as Peter. Two separate entities. He couldn't hold back.

Except he did.

Beck froze. It was like his brain completely cracked open and only dust came out. He knew all of Spider-man's deepest fears and traumatic memories. He had a fully stocked arsenal against the kid, and yet nothing came.

They stood there, still and staring. Two idiots in costume. Spider-man at least looked confused but on guard.

He had to get it together. This was embarrassing. He didn't have to physically hurt him, not like he could anyway without his drones. But he *could* conjure something fucked up.

Do some damage to him mentally.

Beck raised his hand, and it was wrapped in a web before he could even blink. Spider-man jerked him forward and a foot collided with his stomach, doubling him over.

Okay, that hurt.

"What's the matter?" Spider-man grunted. Still teasing. Still Peter. "Can't get it up?"

He almost laughed, but then he was being kicked back again. His ankle hit something hard, but his hands found nothing behind him when he reached for purchase. The illusion of a black void vanished, and suddenly they were on a sunny rooftop in Queens again, with the only thing stopping Beck from falling fifty or so stories being the stringy web connecting him to Spider-man.

Luckily, from firsthand experience, he knew it to be strong.

Spider-man stalked closer, complete control over his web, keeping it from going slack. Keeping him right on the edge, like he always did.

"What are you planning?"

Beck laughed, and the web loosened. He felt his weight shift back. A normal person would be terrified, but he knew Peter. Enemy or not. He'd never let him fall.

"I'm not joking."

"Oh? That's a new development."

It gave another inch. So, maybe he was a *little* uneasy. He was one decision away from a free-fall. The only solid footing was his boot on the side of the ledge. Beck couldn't see his face, but he knew the look worn under the mask. Sheer and raw determination. If he tried hard enough, he could picture it thoroughly.

Was he really considering it?

In an embarrassing act of desperation, Beck reached out and grabbed onto the web like a lifeline. The sudden jerk caused Spider-man to stumble forward, and Beck to stumble back. This wasn't good. Not only was he in extreme potential danger, but he was also about to miss his cue.

And, because the universe was never particularly kind to him, the bank below erupted into a chorus of screams as people flooded to the street.

There it was. His cue.

Fuck.

“Seriously?” Spider-man whined.

This was the part where he’d normally be hoisted back up and then Spider-man would swing down to the bank. In his experience, at least. But what did experience matter? Because that was certainly not what happened. He felt himself free-falling.

Oh.

Beck wondered what it meant that his final moments were spent agonizing over the thought of Peter finding out his identity via a shattered body on some dirty pavement.

He closed his eyes, bracing himself for an impact that never came. Instead, he felt a warm arm around him, holding onto him tight as they swung safely to the ground. In those split-second moments, Beck couldn’t help but hold on, fingers digging into hard muscle, tucking his head close.

He was thrown to the sidewalk the instant their feet touched it. Beck groaned and pulled himself to his knees, breathing heavy from a hefty dose of adrenaline.

“Didn’t take you for a cuddler.” He sounded nervous, bouncing from foot to foot.

Beck, five seconds away from saying something dangerously stupid, was cut off from a shot ringing from within the bank. Shit. The drones were already firing.

(Not that anyone was in any particular danger, he’d programmed for *no civilian casualties* last minute.)

Still wasn’t sure why he did that.

Spider-man sprang into action, shooting a web to open the door and swing inside. Beck hated the smile that crept to his face, lucky that his helmet hid any evidence of fondness. Peter called Mysterio a drama queen? The kid had some nerve. Beck knew for a fact that he knew how to use doors properly.

Beck quickly followed him inside. There was a small chance he could still salvage this. If he could distract him, then maybe...

“Call it off!” Spider-man yelled. Did he really think it would be that easy?

The woman Beck had crafted held a gun pointed to the clerk, who still looked instantly relieved at the sight of her friendly neighborhood Spider-man. The illusion tilted her head to the side, vacant and stretched grin on her face.

“I know this is one of your illusions, Mysterio.”

“Is it?” Beck taunted.

He twisted his wrist and the woman’s face morphed. Her features grew squarer, more masculine. Dark, pointed, facial hair grew in. Her eyes became tired, doe-eyed, dark brown. Suddenly, she wasn’t a nondescript woman at all.

“Is this real enough for you?” Tony Stark’s voice said.

Beck felt himself being bound, slammed against the bank's cinderblock wall. Something cracked. A bone, piece of his costume? He wasn't sure. All he knew was that he registered a pain that he'd feel tomorrow. Deep down, he also knew this was his own doing. That he wasn't putting up a fight, and that making Peter face the image of his dead mentor was a low-hanging fruit to bide him some time.

He didn't struggle or fight the sticky bonds he was wrapped in. If Spider-man thought it strange, he didn't show it. Probably too preoccupied with a one-track mind brimming with anger. It wasn't like Beck could do much anyway, he was flung to the side too quickly to process.

Illusion-Tony pointed the gun at Peter and finally, Beck panicked. No civilian casualties were one thing, but Spider-man was no civilian.

Fuck.

Would someone as strong as Spider-man survive a bullet? Probably. Super healing and all that. Was he prepared to watch that unfold knowing the truth?

Could he handle having Peter Parker's blood on his hands?

Fuck.

"Execute order!" Beck called out. Spider-man froze, looking back over his shoulder. The skepticism was evident even with a mask covering his face. Beck fought with his bindings, twisting and writhing enough to get a hand free.

The image of Tony disappeared; consequentially, so did the second less conspicuous illusion, and the drone cloaked themselves invisible. But not quick enough to dodge a shot of web. Spider-man hit his target, breaking Beck's little magic trick. The weaponized drone hurdled toward him with a jerk of his wrist.

Oh, he needed to do something about this. Quick.

Beck broke free in an adrenaline-fueled triumph. His opponent, it seemed, was too busy trying to figure out the machine he'd just reeled in like a glitchy fish. Didn't he have senses to warn him against sneak attacks like this?

Spider-man just stood holding the drone, staring at it.

"I'm sorry, kid," Beck said. Spider-man whipped around just in time for a melee punch to the face. No magic required. He used the little time it offered him to recast the invisibility. Couldn't have all his tricks overturned in a single evening.

This had really gone sour.

Didn't Peter say he wanted a new phone? Probably cracked his swinging around New York City. Well, now he was going to have to wait for their yearly upgrade.

He was just about to call it all off, make his daring escape in time to pick up dinner, when something hard and heavy slammed into his back. Whatever it was had pinned him down with a suffocating weight. Beck craned his head, trying to look behind him. The helmet rarely did him favors in the mobility department.

An ATM. Really, Peter?

Beck was strong; he went to the gym, cardio *and* weights. A lot of good that did him, he could barely fucking budge it. He shoved and writhed and whined and watched helplessly as Spider-man completely ignored his valid complaints to hop over the desk and check on the bank teller. She shook as she spoke to him, not that Beck could make out a thing she was saying. Not with the ringing in his ears.

The teller was escorted from the building and Spider-man gave a friendly wave to the crowd of people that had gathered on the streets. It was only then that he recognized the sound of sirens.

“Don’t worry, guys! I got it all under control,” he said, giving a thumbs up.

Beck smiled fondly. Then he remembered his predicament and said smile vanished in a near-instant.

Spider-man walked toward him with a familiar gait. How had he never noticed? That suit hid nothing, and Beck knew every curvature of Peter’s body. The length of his torso, the tone of his legs. The familiar curve of his fingers when they twisted into his shirt. This time, his cape, and to be hauled from beneath an ATM, not into a kiss.

“Go.”

Wait. “What?”

“Go,” he repeated. “Before I change my mind.”

Even with the voice distortion, Peter shined through. And, Beck knew that tone. It was the one that came after a wobble of his lip and furrow of his brow.

He had questions, lots of them, but who was he to turn down a free getaway?

Beck fled, and for the dramatics of it, twisted himself in a cloud of green smoke before cloaking himself invisible like the drones that followed him. When he looked over his shoulder, Spider-man was gone too.

He made it as far as the alley ten blocks down. He collapsed against a wall, shielded by a dumpster and a pile of cardboard boxes, and slide down in the most ungraceful manner. With the adrenaline and thrill of the fight gone, his body ached. A pain in his back, his side, his chest, his head. Beck tried to catch his breath, but each inhale was sharp and painful.

Explaining this was going to be fun.

His helmet clinked against the brick and his head swam with so many thoughts and strange aches, he couldn’t pin anything down. Something was wrong. He felt it in his gut. Or maybe that was just nausea kicking in. Hard to tell.

Black crept into the corners of his vision and the world faded.

Chapter End Notes

A quick note about Beck's power. So, this is an AU where he does have abilities, but they are very limited. He can cast the illusions, but he needs the drones to weaponize them. He still worked on illusion tech with Stark. He's cracked, sure, but he knew that

tech as powerful as him could be revolutionary. I hope that makes sense! :3c

Thank you for all the feedback so far! It seriously is so motivating and heartwarming!

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

[two years ago.]

The box was pathetically light.

A plastic plant, paperweight, stapler, documents he only needed to shred, the framed photo of him and Peter from the robotics department Christmas party. Ten years of his life and this was all he had to show for it?

He should have just thrown it in the dumpster on his way out.

He'd spent the better part of his commute seething mad. Most of it, actually. Now he just felt numb, desensitized to the atrocity committed against him. Stark would pay. He'd make sure of it. How? To be determined.

Beck balanced the lump sum of his employment in one hand and fumbled with his keys for the other. His apartment didn't appear near as empty as it should. Something played on the television, all the lights were on, the distinct sound a fork scraping a plate.

"You're home early," Peter said, mouth stuffed with what was definitely Beck's leftover Chinese. It didn't take him long to notice the box or the raincloud that hovered at the front door. "What's that?"

Beck ignored the question, tossing the box on the ground. He ran a hand through his hair, mussing it up, and gave a hard stare at Peter. "Why are you here?"

It wasn't fair to ask him that. Not when he'd given the kid a house key and told him to come over any time. Which, to reiterate, he was a *kid*. Just seventeen years old and younger than that when he first turned up in Beck's robotics lab to hover like a lost puppy.

He shrugged off his coat, trying not to notice Peter's wounded look.

"It's...it's movie night?"

Fuck. It *was* Tuesday. Who the hell got fired on a Tuesday?

Beck sighed. "I'm sorry, kid. Maybe some other time. You should go home."

"Quentin, hey." Peter jumped off the couch, hesitantly approaching where Beck stood frozen. The first name was always reserved for when Beck was at his lowest. He must look a mess then.

"What's going on?"

"Go home."

Peter stilled himself, a determined little set to his mouth. His eyes flicked toward the box; recognition flooded his face. "Oh, oh no."

"Yeah." Beck brushed past him, straight to the kitchen. He knew he had a bottle of whiskey

somewhere, and he needed a drink. Or two. Three, maybe.

Peter, like the lost puppy he still was, followed.

Beck uncapped the bottle, drank straight from it. Didn't care that he was being watched. He took another drink. And another. God, it tasted like shit. It burned all the way down, but he needed—he needed...

The next drink never made it to his lips. Peter pulled the bottle gently from his hands, cradling it to his chest. His eyes were watery. Why? He still had his new job secured. Fuck. They probably booted him out to make room for Peter. What hellish irony that was.

"I'll talk to Mr. Stark—I'll, I'll fix this."

Beck snorted, trite and unamused. "No offense, kid. You're an intern. What pull could you have?"

Peter fumbled back, recoiled as if slapped. Cute, though. That he thought he could help. He seemed to really believe it. Beck almost felt bad. Almost. Anger washed away most of the guilt.

"I can try." Never gave up, did he? "Beck, please."

Back to the last name again. Weirdly, he missed the way Peter said *Quentin*. So soft, so fond. Just like the way he looked at him. It shined through all the sympathy. God, Beck just wanted to bask in it. Soak up all that authentic compassion before it was wrenched away from him too.

His shoulders sagged; tried to smile. "Okay, yeah, sure."

What could it hurt?

That seemed to pacify him for the moment. At least he didn't look so fucking sad. Peter sat the bottle back on the counter and then turned toward him, shifting from foot to foot. Beck couldn't pinpoint the look in his eyes. Nervous, maybe? Definitely antsy, with the way his gaze kept darting about, finally settling on somewhere in the middle of Beck's chest.

Peter stepped closer, wrapping his arms around him in a tight embrace. He squeezed, pressed his head into Beck's shirt.

Oh.

This was different. Nice. Peter was so warm and soft, and it took Beck's brain a moment to catch up with what was happening. He was being hugged. How long had it been? Tentatively, he brought his arms around Peter, smoothing his hands along his back. The worn fabric so familiar in touch and smell. His old college shirt.

Beck tucked his head atop Peter's and couldn't help but bury his nose in his hair, breathing him in. Grounded and safe. He closed his eyes, unwilling to let go.

The words were muffled when Peter whispered, "I'm sorry."

Strange how that was a punch to the gut. There wasn't any need for apology, not from him. He didn't have any part of it. Or—maybe Beck made him feel that way. Not like he'd treated him the best upon arrival.

"Hey," Beck said softly. He backed up, got a hand on Peter's shoulder, the other on his chin, tilting his gaze upward. His mouth fell open, warm breath ghosting along Beck's fingers. "It's not your

fault.”

Peter looked like he wanted to argue but then thought better of it. Just nodded his head, sniffing back unshed tears. Beck wiped under his eye, collecting dampness with the pad of his thumb. It hit him at once, the intimacy of it all. How he could see every detail of Peter’s face, could count his lashes if he wanted. That his hand was still cradling his face, and neither of them moved away.

That he could kiss him. Worse, that he wanted to.

Beck was never one for resisting temptation. Always found a loophole, and this was no different. He pressed his lips to Peter’s forehead, warm like the rest of him, and gave a chaste kiss. A hand came to grab at his arm, squeezing tightly, all in tandem with a little whimper of a sigh. Beck let his lips linger, drinking it all in.

Savor the moment, he thought, then let it go.

Beck knew the kind of man he was. He didn’t think twice about doing shady deals to elevate his status. He worked hard, sure, but it was all to his own ambition. Cheat, lie, steal. It came naturally to him, unburdened with a guilty conscious, as long as his endeavors propelled him to the spotlight. Selfish, all of it. He knew that and even accepted it.

But Peter, the kid was his blind spot.

And he was *good*, so fucking good.

Beck had gone most of his life feeling like he deserved most things, but he never truly felt like he deserved Peter.

He pulled away, really pulled away this time. It was nearly torturous to do so, and the look he was faced with in the aftermath didn’t help matters. Peter looked on the edge of collapse. Funny how Beck couldn’t figure out who was comforting who. He wanted nothing more than to tug him back into an embrace, tell him it was going to be okay, even if it wasn’t.

That scared him more than anything.

“So,” Peter said, his voice a little shaky. He gave Beck a smile that read nothing but hopeful. “Movie night?”

This was going to hurt.

“Kid,” he sighed. The smile vanished. “You really should get home.”

Let him go.

“Oh.” Peter looked two degrees past devastation. He swallowed, gave a vacant nod, then wiped his eye with the back of his hand. “Okay, yeah.”

Beck went for the bottle the moment he was alone. He barely even tasted the whiskey as it slid down his throat. Nothing but the familiar sting in his stomach and his chest. His eyes screwed shut and he tried to steady himself. The world just seemed to be unraveling, one loose seam at a time.

Peter came to stand in the doorway of the kitchen, his backpack slung over his shoulder. Still in Beck’s shirt.

“I’m just gonna,” Peter awkwardly pointed toward the door. “Just. Yeah, okay. Bye.”

“Wait,” Beck called, not sure why.

Well, he had an idea. A terrible idea; and he was a monster, but not that kind. The kid was already having his heart stomped on, there was no reason to add insult to injury. No matter if he wanted it. No matter if Peter wanted it. He was young, he’d recover. Beck figured he had a week before he was barely a trace of a thought in Peter’s head.

Peter looked at him expectantly, each passing second probably building false hope.

“My shirt.”

“Oh. Sorry.”

Peter slung his backpack off, grabbed the hem the shirt with both hands. He got it nearly half off before Beck’s brain came back online.

“No,” he said, and for the first time all day, Beck laughed. “No, god. Just give it back to me later.”

Later. There, he put it out there, an invitation. Later, for when he wasn’t so weak to his own inhibitions. Once he’d figured this whole mess out. Assuming Peter wanted anything to do with him by then. A little time apart might make him realize how messed up this whole thing was, chaste as it seemed.

“I’ll see you then.”

“Yeah,” Beck said. He rubbed his hand over his face, looked away. Didn’t really find a point in watching him leave. “See you.”

He did, on principle, wait until he was sure Peter had left to wander back into the living room. It felt unbearably empty. The television still played softly in the background, the couch was prepped with pillows and blankets and the coffee table held two sweating sodas. Beck’s leftover Chinese sat half-eaten.

His heart broke in a way he didn’t think was capable.

It took three days to crack; a week to splinter open completely, the part of him that he’d kept carefully hidden coming to surface. Beck had seen what happened to people like him, people that were different. Special. The world trussed them up in a cape and costume and made them do their bidding under the guise of *heroism*.

But that wasn’t him.

No, he was something else entirely.

His illusions were rusty, glitchy like some old school special effects. All smoke and mirrors. He practiced, day after day, crafting what he could until the image was seamless. Until even he couldn't tell the difference between his creations and reality.

He'd been going about this all wrong, he realized. There was a reason for the show, the drama, of it. Iron Man, Spider-man—god, *all* of them. People only took you seriously if it looked like you pulled yourself from the pages of a comic. People wanted the absurd, they clung to it.

Beck could give them that.

Stark had taken his work, made it a joke. Fired him. But—the world? The world was going to take him seriously.

Peter waited on the other side of the door with a crooked smile and a take-out bag. "I owe you."

Beck paused for a moment, almost in shock. It'd been two weeks, maybe more, time was a fickle thing. Part of him almost felt he needed to reach out and touch, make sure it wasn't all just another illusion. But he didn't have to, because Peter nudged his way inside, all in a confidence he'd never really witnessed before. Bold and determined.

"Sure, come on in," Beck said dryly as Peter made himself at home like he always did.

God, he'd missed him.

Peter sat the bag on the coffee table, bent over to divvy out the contents, then stopped abruptly to do a double-take. "You've got a—" He gestured to his own baby-soft face.

"Oh, yeah." Beck instinctively rubbed his hand along his chin and cheek, bristled with hair. It started with a couple of missed shaves but grown into something full and resembling purposeful. "It's not a depression beard."

Peter held up his hands. "I didn't say that."

"Do you like it?" Beck asked, suddenly self-conscious. Which was insane in its own right. "It's a bit much, isn't it?"

"What, no," Peter answered, all too quickly. He stood, shifting from foot to foot, so much like the other night. Only, this time there wasn't sadness in his eyes. His throat bobbed when he swallowed; he looked like he wanted to touch. "I like it."

Probably best not to entertain that particular compliment. He gestured for Peter to sit back down, which he did, flopping onto the cushions like a ragdoll, watching Beck with an unreadable expression as he did the same. The opposite end, of course, far away. *Not* close enough for their legs to touch.

And he definitely didn't think about how he *wanted* their legs to touch. Or, how he'd missed Peter in these weeks, accepted that he was probably never coming back. What reason was there? They were work associates, colleagues—

Except, he knew that wasn't true.

And he *knew* why Peter came back. It was the same reason he let him back in.

"You're okay, right?"

Beck frowned. Yeah, that's right. The last Peter saw him, he was a mess; drank a whole bottle of whiskey and passed out on the couch. At least he could answer without lying. "Yeah, I'm good. Rough transition, but I put some feelers out. It's all going to come together."

Peter smiled. "Good, man. I was really worried, but I—I wanted to give you space."

"I appreciate that." That was also the truth. With Peter lurking around his apartment, he would have never been able to shape his plan. "But, for what it's worth, I'm glad you're here now." He leaned the distance of the sofa, clamping Peter on the shoulder and giving a firm squeeze.

God, his skin felt like fire, even through the barrier of his thin shirt.

"Do you want to talk about what happened?" Peter asked quietly. His eyes were trained on Beck's hand, but he couldn't pull away, just ended up kneading the flesh there in some bastardized massage. "I heard about—"

"No, all in the past." He smiled. It felt stretched and forced. Beck wondered if it was the obtaining and renaming of his work or the fact that Stark found him unstable. Unsuitable. "I've made my peace."

Or, he planned on it.

"Oh," Peter said, a note of surprise. "Good, that's good."

Awkward silence befell them, the food on the table growing cold and untouched. Beck wasn't sure if it was subconscious or just their natural gravitation that pulled them together on the already too-small couch. Fuck. He could smell Peter's shampoo, his body spray and—had he gelled his hair?

"They offered me a position," Peter blurted out, then seemed to think better of it. "For when I turn eighteen."

"Yeah?" He tried to sound supportive, and it did sting, but only a little. Beck was proud, all things considered. Smart, hard-working, loyal; he'd be perfect, just what Stark was looking for. "You deserve it, kiddo."

"Thanks," Peter mumbled, ears red. His eyes refused to focus on anything that wasn't his finger picking at the hem of his jeans. "That's next month, by the way. My birthday..."

"The eighth, right?" Beck asked like he didn't know it was the tenth. Like he hadn't had the date circled in red in his mental calendar for over a year.

"Tenth," he corrected, and Beck gave him a teasing smile which earned him a punch on the arm. A punch that required him to lean closer. A lean that he didn't shy away from.

"What do you want?"

"What?" Peter was staring, blinking owlishly.

"What do you want?" The words came out lower than he intended. He tried, and failed, not to let his gaze flicker down to pink lips. Then clarified— "For your birthday."

“I don’t know.” Peter sucked in a breath, inching closer. “Maybe go out for dinner?”

“Yeah?” Beck asked, breathless.

These past two weeks, he’d been pretty sure he was putting himself back together. Even thought that he was doing a decent job. He had his plan of action, he had his motivation, he had his set-up for revenge. And here was Peter, blushing pretty and nodding his head while looking at Beck like he was the only goddamn thing in the universe.

“Just the two of us?”

“Yeah, kid,” Beck sighed. “Just the two of us.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay! So I *really* enjoyed writing this flashback chapter. There probably won't be anymore in the fic, and this was just kinda' necessary for the stuff to come. A little breathing room, if you will. But, I was thinking, if it interested anyone...after the fic is over doing like a little series of slices from their life? Maybe first date, first kiss...some set after the fic with context I can not give away. /sweat.

And as always, thank you for your awesome support! Your comments mean everything to me and I cherish every single one! <3

Chapter 5

Dark and noisy—that was all Beck could decipher as the world swam into view from the edges of black that still clung to his vision.

Still slumped in that dirty back alley, it seemed.

His head pounded, his body ached with a dull thrum of pain, and the sirens wailing in the distance didn't help the increasingly sharp migraine.

What time was it?

Fuck.

What time was it?

Beck fished his phone from a hidden, secure pocket in his armor. After midnight, and with nearly twenty missed calls from Peter and only two text messages.

Where are you?

Are you okay??

He groaned and deleted the conversation straight from his inbox without opening them. His hideout wasn't far from here, he just needed to get there and stash away his suit and change. Then probably find a good alibi that made up for him being out so late and hobbling like he was geriatric.

The walk to the old, abandoned industrial factory was rough. Cloaked in an illusionary disguise, no one had to be aware of his busted chest plate or slight limp. Totally normal. Just another guy.

Which was the problem, wasn't it? For all his power, he was still weak. Physically and mentally. Beck ran from Spider-man and then ran straight to Peter. His life was just one colossal punch to the gut, one after the other.

Beck moved in a zombie-like daze. Slipped into his hide-out, stripped out of his armor, examined his bruises and lacerations in a dirty, spider-webbed mirror. Only a man, he was reminded again. He fished a duffle bag from a busted vent and carefully redressed in an old dingy tee and some jeans. Beck grabbed his phone, past one now, and sighed.

No new calls or texts. Either Peter was sleeping, or he was furious. Possibly both.

He'd tell Peter he was mugged. Two guys—no, three—and they took his money. Beck pulled out his out of the duffle bag and shoved the cash into one of the zippered pockets, then his card too. It'd make sense for a mugger to take his phone but replacing a screen would be cheaper than replacing it entirely, so he just slammed it against the concrete wall until it splintered. Filing a police report was time-consuming, so that could buy him an excuse for the late hour.

Beck didn't like lying to Peter, he really didn't. But what was worse? A white lie, or the truth? Sometimes, dishonesty was better.

He pressed his ear to their apartment door. Everything was quiet. Maybe Peter really was sleeping, and he could slip into bed, explain everything in the morning.

Or, the monstrous part of his brain supplied, maybe Peter was gone.

Beck opened the door quietly as he could, careful not to disturb anything. Oh, thank god. He sighed in relief to see Peter sitting on the couch, so grateful for his mere presence that he ignored the way he was slumped over with his head in his hands.

“Pete?”

Peter lifted his head, his eyes wide and red-rimmed and his cheeks just as stained with tears. He blinked as if he were looking at a ghost. “Quentin?”

“Hey,” he tried to sound comforting but was unable to hide the shake in his own voice. “Hey, I’m sorry—”

“*Quentin*,” Peter said; this time no worry. Anger. He stood abruptly, his hands balled into fists, his walk somehow both steady and unsure as he stepped closer. God, he was wearing one of Beck’s shirts—and yeah, he knew he was in trouble but that sight, it always did him in.

Peter reached out and snatched him by the collar, hauling him closer with nothing but the force of sheer and unadulterated rage. His teeth clenched when he whispered— “Where were you?”

“Police department,” Beck managed to get out. He’d never seen Peter this upset, and frankly, it was a little disjuncting. “I was mugged leaving the store. Honey—”

The pet name that Peter always swooned to hear lit a new fire in his eyes. Beck didn’t think it was possible for him to look angrier, and yet somehow...

“I was worried about you.”

“My phone was broken.” Beck’s eyes trailed down to the fist in his shirt, twisting more and more in that iron grip.

“I could have lost you,” Peter whispered, broken and hoarse with all the hours he must have been crying. Here, alone. “I thought I had...”

Beck frowned. The way he said it, it didn’t sound like the end to the thought.

The tears that Peter was so obviously holding back spilled, just like that. He choked out a heavy sob, eyes darting back and forth across Beck’s face. Peter lifted a shaky hand to his cheek, running his fingers through the coarse hair of his beard; testing and timid in a way he hadn’t been in years.

Beck reached up and gently took hold of his wrist. “I’m here.”

“Yeah,” Peter said in a raspy breath. “Yeah, you are.”

The kiss that came was harsh and punishing. Peter pressed his mouth against him, his hand easily slipping from his cheek to his hair, pulling him down into it. Familiar, in the way that Peter always

tasted, but in another, less refined, manner as well. Part of Beck felt like he should be concerned, worried at the very least, but Peter's mouth opened, his tongue licked out for entry and Beck was helpless but to oblige him.

It was frantic, and sloppy, and desperate, and it set his blood on fire. Peter tugged on his shirt and walked them backward, and Beck did his best to guide them. It wasn't until they stumbled into their room that Peter turned them around and shoved him onto the mattress with unnerving strength.

"Pete," Beck tried. Something was wrong, little alarm bells going off in the back on his mind but then, oh, Peter was pulling off his pajama bottoms and underwear right there at the end of the bed. He went from the shirt next, and as much as Beck loved to look at Peter's small but muscled body, he stopped him. "Wait, keep it on."

Peter stumbled, but slowly lowered the hem back down. It was long enough to cover his already stiffening cock, but that was fine. Beck's heart hammered in his chest, a surge of possessiveness at the sight of his clothing on *his* boy. He licked his lips, and Peter watched the movement.

"You look good like that."

Peter's face pinked. He still looked angry, still sad, but pretty in the way he *still* blushed for him. "Shut up," he grumbled. It didn't sound teasing, it sounded like he meant it.

Which might have concerned Beck if Peter wasn't then crawling onto the bed and up to his body, straddling his hips and pushing him back with a hand on his chest.

"Shut up," Peter repeated, sniffed back some tears. "Just stop talking."

Beck only complied once he was kissed again, just as needy as the first one. He couldn't help but moan into Peter's mouth when he was ground against. Peter, naked from the waist down and trying his best to work him to full attention, despite what must have been an uncomfortable scrape of denim.

"Hey," Beck murmured against his mouth, hands going to Peter's rocking hips in an attempt to stop him. "Slow down."

Peter pulled back, and for a moment Beck thought he might get up and leave altogether, but he only scooted back enough to get his hands on the fly of his jeans. No slowing down, suddenly so stubborn. But, oh god, Beck couldn't find it in himself to care when he gave a hard tug to his pants.

Beck threw his head back against the pillow, groaned as his cock bobbed hard and slapped against his stomach. Peter took him in hand, giving him a couple long, teasing strokes that had his hips twitching upward.

"Pete," Beck whispered; half in concern, half in desire. He seemed so distant, not there at all, just watching his hand slip around the length of Beck with tear-glazed eyes. "Peter—"

He was ignored again, and soon there was a body leaning over his. Not to kiss him, but to reach into the nightstand drawer to fish out the small bottle of lube. Peter sat back on his haunches and Beck could only watch as he uncapped and squeezed a sizable amount into his palm.

That vague sense of unease lingered. That feeling that something was off. Something wasn't right.

A fleeting thought compared to Peter slicking up his cock with a firm hand.

“Oh, fuck,” Beck moaned. He got two handfuls of Peter’s thighs, rubbing his broad hands up and down, fingers teasing at the hem of his shirt, pushing it up until he fitted his grip around slender hips. That got a reaction, a soft gasp and finally something resembling bliss. Peter worked him faster, and Beck bucked up in rhythm with the quick pulls. “That’s it, baby. That’s so good—”

Peter made a pained, choked sound, and jerked his hand back. Beck would have felt the loss if it wasn’t for him then scooting up, lining up with his slicked-up cock.

He barely registered the fact he hadn’t prepped Peter at all, unless...

His body blazed at the thought of Peter readying himself for this. Wanting to ride him so bad he’d put on his old tee and open himself up. Maybe that fantasy didn’t exactly align with events but, hard to argue when Peter sunk down on him.

Fuck, he was *so* tight. Hot, and tight, and so perfect. It took a moment for two things to click. One, why the stretch felt so good. There wasn’t a barrier between them, no condom, just the feeling of Peter all around him. Two, this was a body forcing itself to yield.

“Wait,” Beck groaned, grabbing at his hips, trying his best to stop him. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

Ignored again. Peter pushed down, his hands against Beck’s chest for some leverage, his fingers curling in the front of his shirt. He wished he’d had a chance to strip, he wanted to feel Peter all of him. And he *already* felt so good, it almost distracted him the situation at hand. That he was splitting Peter open, bare, flesh-to-flesh.

“I don’t—” Beck hissed, and Peter swiveled his hips minutely, causing both of them to make a pained gasp. “Oh, fuck, kiddo. I don’t wanna—”

“Hurt me?”

Beck gasped, panted, and rocked his hips to meet Peter’s shifts down against his lap. His words said one thing, but his body said another. He didn’t want to hurt him; but god, he didn’t want to stop either.

Peter’s hand drifted to Beck’s neck, touched feather-light before he pulled back. “Are you sure?”

“What?” He could barely process the words.

“Don’t you want to hurt me?” He was really going now, really finding his rhythm. God, he looked so beautiful. “C’mon,” he whispered, balling his fists into Beck’s shirt. His voice wavered and cracked, fresh tears rolling. “Hurt me.”

Beck would have frowned if his face allowed anything but creased brows and open-mouthed groans. This wasn’t like Peter, he knew that, but it was hard to think when someone was fucking themselves so precisely on his cock.

What did that even mean anyway? Beck could only surmise he wanted it rougher. Harder thrusts. He planted his feet firmly on the mattress and lifted his hips, holding Peter by his tiny waist. There it was. The perfect angle to drive up into him.

Peter cried out and fell forward to hold onto the headboard, bracing himself. He grunted and hissed through his teeth with every push. “Hurt me,” he said again.

Beck was already dangerously close, but he tried to comply.

“Hurt me.”

Fuck, he was trying. His hips were slamming so hard into him the neighbors could probably hear the lewd smack of skin. Peter proved to be insatiable, and Beck wasn't sure if what dripped on his face was sweat or tears.

“Please.”

He just wanted to give him what he asked for.

“Alright, kid,” Beck groaned. He pushed up one last time, hands slipping around Peter's back as he flipped them. He hovered, readjusting himself inside, and savored the look it earned him. So sweet and wanting. “You got it.”

Beck didn't hold back. He didn't have half the strength that Peter did, but he gave it his all. Peter arched against the bed, made the prettiest noises. His tight, taut little body taking everything Beck threw his way. All of his brute strength and every bruising grip.

Peter blindly reached for one of Beck's wrists and dragged it up his body, positioning it on his neck. Familiar, and accompanied with even more familiar sirens.

“Do it,” Peter whispered. His hand curled around the hand on his throat, forcing pressure. A tear slipped down his cheek, and Beck could see that his lip was trembling. “Go ahead.”

Everything stopped. Beck jerked his hand away like it burned, staring at the flat palm of his hand and then down at Peter shook in silent sobs.

“Pete, honey,” Beck spoke softly. He reached down with the same hand that aimed to choke and cupped his cheek with as much tenderness a man like him could muster. “What's going on?”

“Don't stop.” He rocked his hips, trying to urge him on. “Please, I need this.”

“Yeah?”

Peter bit his bottom lip and nodded his head; going for sultry, but it just came out broken.

“You need me?” Beck asked him.

Peter let out a strangled noise.

Beck moved his hips slowly, a smooth roll. He bent down and kissed a tear-stained cheek. “You need me, Pete?”

He reached between them and took ahold of his cock, squeezing and stroking.

“Say it,” Beck demanded, and Peter let out a whine that could have been an answer. A couple more strokes and Beck's hand was left wet and sticky with a louder answer than words could ever give.

Peter craned his head for a desperate kiss. He didn't urge for more, but let Beck fuck him the way he wanted. Intimate and slow. Until they were both breathing heavy into each other's space, foreheads knocked together. Peter's fingers dug into his shoulder and then slide down his back, grabbing a handful of his ass and squeezing.

Fuck. Beck remembered last second that there was no condom, and out of habit, from those few drunk nights where they forgot to be careful, he tried to pull out. The hand on his ass kept him buried deep.

“In me,” Peter breathed in his ear.

Couldn’t deny the kid that.

He gave a couple feeble attempts at a thrust, his hips stuttering to a stop. Peter let out a breathy moan and squeezed harder on Beck’s cheek, pressing down like he couldn’t get enough of it. God, and did Beck feel like he had more than enough to give. He marked Peter up completely.

Beck fell forward, elbows bracketing either side of Peter’s face. He could do nothing but stare down at him, a little dazed, a little starry-eyed. Overwhelmed with that familiar feeling looking at Peter always gave him in his chest.

Then, came the guilt.

Fuck it.

“Hey,” Beck whispered. Peter refused to meet his eyes. “I need to tell you something.”

Peter weaseled his hands up, taking Beck’s face in his hands and shook his head. “No.”

“It’s—”

“Don’t.”

Beck’s mouth set into a straight line. He wanted to argue, it was just in his nature, but something about Peter’s silent plea told him better. Which was for the best, he really shouldn’t confess anything in a post-sex haze.

“Okay,” he sighed, so easy to give up, “I won’t.”

“Let’s just stay like this a little longer.”

He could do that. Beck pulled out slowly, relishing the squeak of a noise Peter made as a result. He smiled, kissed the corner of his cheek sloppy, and rolled over to gather Peter in his arms. He was so warm against him, slotted so perfectly against him like he was meant for nowhere else. Beck kissed the top of his head.

His.

The whole thing had knocked a screw in his brain loose. Beck didn’t recall the fight earlier that day. The failed bank robbery. Passing out in an alley. Breaking his own phone. Lying about a robbery. Peter in distress. It all slipped away so easily, with his boy tucked against his side.

Beck hummed under his breath; pleased and content. He turned to set the alarm clock and frowned.

Something wasn’t right.

Something was missed.

The framed photo of them that once resided in his Stark office, and then by the bed every day after that. A panic thrummed in his chest, his heart in his throat.

It was gone.

Chapter 6

A quick scan around the room revealed the photo wasn't the only thing missing. The closet door was open, full of empty hangers. Little things, gone, missing. His chest felt tight. Suffocating like all the air was sucked out of the room in an instant.

"Pete?"

"Stop," Peter's voice cracked. Beck felt his head press closer to his chest, his arm tightening around him. Unwilling to let go. "Just a little longer."

Until what?

Longer until what?

But he didn't need an answer. He knew.

And, no, they weren't doing this. Not now, and not later. They just—they *weren't*. They couldn't. Him and Peter? They'd been through too much, fought too hard for what they had. Beck shook his head. Denial was a hell of a drug.

"I have to," Peter whispered.

"What?"

Oh, he must have been thinking out loud again. Great.

Peter sat up; his hair wild and errant, eyes red and skin blotchy. His face held so much heartbreaking sympathy that it made Beck's stomach curl. He wiped the corner of his eye with the back of his hand, and Beck stared at the smooth hump of his shoulder where the collar pulled. Anything but that agonizing stare. He couldn't take it.

"It doesn't matter how hard we fought," Peter choked out, followed by a depreciating huff of a laugh. "Or, I don't know, maybe that's it exactly."

"I'm not following."

Beck reached out, trying to touch his cheek. Something, anything, to ground him. Peter dodged his advance, scooting farther away, tucking his knees to his chest while he stared vacantly at the wall. "Pete, come on, you have to tell me what's going on."

Peter said nothing.

"*Pete.*"

Beck watched him blink back more tears.

"Honey—"

"I need to go," Peter scrambled up. "I can't—I'm sorry, just...I need to go."

"Wait." Beck followed suit, just as frantic and—fuck. He nearly tripped over his own feet trying to wrangle his jeans back up. Peter was slipping on his sweatpants, not waiting at all. In fact, he looked like he couldn't get decent quick enough. "Wait, Pete, *wait.*"

Peter went to the corner where—oh, god, his packed suitcase was. He mumbled under his breath, and Beck couldn't process any of it. Just bits and pieces of incoherent thought.

Then, finally— "I should have known."

"Known what?" Beck's stomach sank—or maybe his heart rose? There was a lump in this throat and a heaviness in his gut.

"That I couldn't have a normal life." Peter ripped his yellow jacket from the hanger. The last piece of his clothing. He didn't look at Beck while he shrugged it on. "That I couldn't do this with you forever."

Fuck. He just needed things to slow down for one goddamn second.

Beck fell to the edge of the bed, hands in his hair as he helplessly watched Peter gather his things up. Any soft protest he made was met with stubborn silence. Nothing in his brain worked properly, nothing made any sense at all.

"You can though," he tried to say. "I don't—Peter, just put it down. You can."

"Please," Peter begged. His voice sounded so strained, so small. "Don't make this harder."

"I'm not making you do anything."

"Stop."

"No, *you* stop. Just put it down and talk to me."

Peter blanched. "It's a little late for that."

"Is this—" Beck racked his brain. "Peter, I was at the police department. I can get a report."

He'd thought about that, of course. Ten years at Stark Enterprise, he'd been asked to hack into a database or two. Not that anyone would have ever admitted to that particular fact. Doctoring up a police report wouldn't be a problem—

"You're kidding me, right?"

"Do I look like I'm laughing?"

Peter scoffed, and then *he* was laughing. A hollow sound, devoid of humor, and nothing like the warm and comforting melody Beck was used to.

"You're a real piece of work, Beck."

Bitter.

Beck stood when Peter tried to pass, reaching out and closing his hand around the wrist that held the suitcase. Peter froze, staring down where they were joined, where Beck's fingers enveloped him completely. Beck used the momentary stillness to his advantage, cupping Peter's cheek in a familiar and intimate gesture.

"Let me fix it," he whispered, it sounded watery and broken to his own ears. Didn't even have it in him to feel embarrassed about it.

For the briefest of moments, Beck felt like he got through.

Then Peter wrenched himself away effortlessly, so strong for a boy of his size and stature. God, he couldn't even dwell on how magnificent that truly was, not when Peter looked at him with so much sorrow. So much disbelief.

"Fix it?" Peter asked. Like he couldn't fathom the audacity Beck had for suggesting it. "You *can't*."

"I can try."

The sincerity in his plea scared even himself. He'd never felt so desperate before, and that was saying something. He knew he'd done some really fucked up things out of desperation. This time, when Beck reached out and grabbed the suitcase, and Peter watched in horror as he threw it on the bed and unlatched it.

"I can try," he repeated. Peter was solid beside him, trying to shove the clothes back in as Beck pulled them out. An elbow to his gut and a push to his chest had Beck stumbling back and away from the bed. "Let me try and fix it, Pete."

Whatever *it* was. Whatever Peter needed fixing? He'd do it.

Peter turned from the suitcase, his carefully folded clothes now in disarray. Oh, that wasn't a look of sadness anymore. That was unbridled rage.

"How are you supposed to fix it, Beck? How can you fix *anything*?" Peter near screamed, his hand gesturing around their bedroom wildly before falling limply to his side. Defeated, and with a dawning realization. "You can't even fix yourself."

Beck opened his mouth—but Peter wasn't done.

"You don't even know...?" Peter's voice trailed off, his mouth slack and his eyes wide. He reached up and grabbed two fistfuls of his hair, pulling until the curls stood on end. "Jesus, Beck."

Say something.

Say something.

He had nothing. Nothing at all. No excuse, no alibi. Nothing to make Peter stay. He should fight for it, right? Go kicking and screaming. That was what he was best at. Stark had burned him, and he'd created Mysterio. He always found a way to get what was owed to him.

Except Peter wasn't owed to him.

Peter wasn't his. Never had been.

Beck had always known this day would come. The day when Peter would figure him out; see past all his illusions, see the cracked shell of a person he truly was behind all the flash and empty confidence. That he would come to realize he had a whole life ahead of him, an entire life that Beck had already lived. A life that Beck could never give him, not really.

"Nothing?" Peter asked; quiet and broken. "You can't even be bothered to lie."

"I'm just sick of it."

Peter's lip trembled and he tucked it between his teeth, looking around the room, soaking it all in for what was probably the last time. "Okay," he finally said. "Okay, I'm going to stay with May for

a while.”

He knew what *a while* meant.

“Yeah, alright.”

Peter stared at him hard. “That’s it?”

“What am I supposed to say?” Beck sighed. He’d already moved way past denial and straight into acceptance. Peter wasn’t his to keep. He knew this. He’d been through it before. “Go.”

Peter snatched the suitcase up. It wasn’t big, a vintage thing passed down from his uncle. There was no way it held his plethora of geeky science tees and flannels. Which meant—he’d probably already moved stuff out before Beck showed up.

Maybe he’d never even planned on saying goodbye.

Beck refused to watch him leave, but Peter stopped right in his line of vision—wearing Beck’s shirt and with his baggage in hand. He kept his gaze trained over Peter’s shoulder, stare vacant and at the wall. The bed wasn’t a safe place to look, not when the sheets were probably still warm.

With a heavy sigh, Peter left.

Beck called into his shitty IT job the following day.

Then the next, and the next, and the next, until finally, HR asked if he just wanted to burn a couple weeks of vacation and he reluctantly agreed. No one asked questions, which was good. Better than good. He didn’t feel like explaining and certainly didn’t feel like he owed anyone answers.

Peter’s absence ate at him, right through his chest and what was left of that thing he called a heart. And he’d be lying if he said he handled it well.

His apartment was a wreck. It’d taken all of five minutes after Peter closed the front door for him to snap. Shelves were wiped clean with swoops of his arms, the coffee table was flipped, the hall mirror was cracked, and his hand was busted.

Beck looked at his knuckles, at the still-healing scabs over the cuts. If Peter were here, he’d fuss over it, drag him into the bathroom and clean him up, dab him with Neosporin and put on one of those dumb character band-aids he bought on “accident”.

An intrusive thought, but it made him smile, nonetheless.

Sometime during the middle of the second week, Beck decided that maybe wallowing in self-pity wasn’t the way to go about it. He needed to try to be better. Right? That’s what Peter wanted.

(Actually, he had no idea what Peter wanted. Because, after days in the company of his own head, Beck realized Peter hadn't told him shit. Which—had only made things worse for him. He wasn't the kind of man to be left with lingering questions, and he didn't have the mind to deduce rational answers. Again, a character flaw.)

Naturally, with all that noise buzzing in his head, day in and day out, Beck reasoned that he needed a coffee. Part of him screamed to go to the shop three blocks further away than his and Peter's usual stop. Conjuring up pleasant memories probably wouldn't do him much good. But, the other part of him, the thirty-eight-year-old man with questionable knees, said differently.

And, because both parts were a glutton for punishment, he went with option A.

The barista barely recognized him with his baseball cap and indoor sunglasses, which was fine by him. The last thing he needed was someone asking about Peter, forcing him to level the place. He liked their coffee; they made a mean Americano.

Luckily, he got his order with no damage done, and with no chirpy questions about the nice young man that usually accompanied him. Beck picked up a Daily Bugle from the paper stand, tossed some loose change and dollars into the tip jar, and made his way to the rickety table by the window like nothing was amiss.

It was nice, in a strange sort of way. He felt almost normal again.

Almost.

Seeing the Spider-man headline in the paper didn't settle in his gut too well, unfortunately. Not that he expected anything less. If the front page of the Bugle wasn't about Spider-man, it was usually about him. And it wasn't like he was checking up on Peter or anything. This was just his favorite paper.

Still, he frowned around the lip of his mug.

Spider-man MIA? Neighborhood Vigilante Goes Missing!

Now that was...interesting.

He scanned the front page for any sign of a clue, but it all came up the same rehashed information. There was no masked hero swooping in to save the little guy. Petty crime had escalated in the past weeks. Spider-man was nowhere to be seen.

And if Beck knew Peter—which, he did—that meant something was wrong.

He pulled out his phone; scrolled to the last conversation between him and Peter; immediately exited it; opened a new text to May Parker; immediately exited that too.

No, he wasn't doing this. Who cared that Spider-man was hanging up his hat? It shouldn't bother him in the least bit. This was good news for Mysterio.

And yet, there was no desire to suit up.

Beck tossed the paper across the table and sipped slowly on his coffee, people watching from his window seat. He didn't need Mysterio. He didn't Spider-man. He didn't need Peter Parker.

He sighed and looked at the patchwork of animal flyers taped to the window.

Maybe he just needed a dog.

Chapter 7

“So, you see, Pete...I’m doing great.”

Peter eyed him with thinly veiled skepticism. “It sure seems like it.”

Beck leaned back against the couch, holding his arms out in show, and leveled him with a challenging smile. Peter looked less-than-impressed.

“I am,” he assured. Confident, unwavering. It’d been a whole week since he’d smashed a mirror, and he’d even made it back into work.

He was perfectly fine.

Peter hummed under his breath and raised his eyebrows. Never did believe him, did he? Of course not, as stubborn as he was. Even now; like this.

“Is that why you’re using your illusions as a—” Peter put a finger on his chin in a dramatic charade of thinking. “What was it? A self-therapy session? Seems awfully familiar, if you ask me.”

Beck whistled through his teeth. “Low blow.”

“No one to blame but yourself.”

Yeah, okay, so maybe Peter had a point. Or, maybe *he* had a point, rather. Beck sighed, shoulders slumping. He waved his hand and Peter wisped away, leaving an empty seat behind. Self-therapy wasn’t exactly what he would call it—but he couldn’t deny it could be cathartic. Hell, maybe Stark had a point too.

The *real* point was, seeing Peter again was inevitable. Especially once he picked back up the mantle of Mysterio. He couldn’t be having a breakdown in the middle of Manhattan with Spider-man there to bear witness. If anything, this was exposure therapy.

The sting of seeing Peter’s goofy smile lessened each time. Still, there was an ever-present ache, but slowly it dulled to something more tolerable. Something that Beck could manage with just enough control.

He’d be fine, and if the reappearance of Spider-man meant anything, so would Peter.

The only problem Beck faced was how to *show* Peter he was better.

He wasn’t going to call first and hinting around with May was out of the question. She had always been polite to him, but it was never hard to tell she didn’t approve. After all, Peter had run off with a man nearly twenty years his senior. He couldn’t really blame her.

They didn’t have any mutual friends.

They no longer worked in the same space, and Beck “wasn’t allowed on the premises” for “legal

reasons”.

The universe didn’t leave him with many options.

So, he bought a police scanner and set it up in his safehouse. Then, he suited up and sat tinkering with the channels until something came through the static that sounded even remotely like it would be up Spider-man’s alley.

Because, it was weird for Beck to run into Peter—but Mysterio running into Spider-man? That was just expected.

The first time turned out to be a bit of a disaster. He showed up, fully primped and in costume, feeling like a million bucks, to find a guy running with a stolen purse. No red-suited hero in pursuit. It’d taken nothing but a faux alley entrance that led straight into a brick wall to stop him. Beck plucked the purse from the out-cold mugger and passed it off to the fruit stand lady. She seemed trustworthy enough.

The second time went much the same way. No Spider-man, a couple of petty thieves, and a well-placed illusion.

Then the third, and the one after that, and the one after that.

Beck was really starting to feel like he was the friendly neighborhood Spider-man. And, he could have sworn that Peter was no longer missing in action? He’d been on the news just two days prior. The Bugle was busting with new photographs. Though Beck supposed there was a lot of crime to account for in New York City.

He’d run into him...eventually.

“Robbery...off Main street—” Beck reached over and snatched up the scanner, giving it a little tap. The static crackled back to life and he held his ear to the speaker. “Two suspects on foot—”

Easy.

Beck tossed back his lukewarm to-go coffee and retracted the glass dome of his helmet, shuffling up to book it out of the warehouse. He hated to admit it, but he almost saw the appeal in what Peter did. There was a certain adrenaline rush about it. He could really care less if the culprits faced jail-time or repented for their actions, but slamming a few hot-headed assholes who knew nothing of true villainy or the artistry of it?

Yeah, he could get used to that.

Finding the guys didn’t prove to be too difficult.

(Seriously, what was with the police force around here? No wonder Peter was overworked.)

They turned quickly down an alley, skidding to a stop to find a mirage of Mysterio waiting. Beck, the real Mysterio, crept up behind them. Illusion-Mysterio held out his arms in a grand gesture, just ready to spout off something long enough to hold their attention while he could prep his attack only —

The dumpster flew from one side of the alley to the other, crashing straight through Illusion-Mysterio, propelled solely by a string of web attached to...

Beck’s heart fluttered.

Peter—err, no, *Spider-man*.

The two thieves looked exchanged a look of horror and scrambled to flee to the crowded street. Beck waved his hand, conjured an entourage of police and squad cars to roll up to the mouth of the exit, and waited just long enough for them to panic and freeze to yell— “Web ‘em!”

“What?”

“*Web them.*” Beck waved a gloved hand to the idiots between them. Though it probably pained him to do so, Spider-man obeyed. He spun them up, hung them from the rickety fire exit, and then turned, metaphorical guns blazing, to Beck. “Wait.”

“Give me one good reason.”

“I—” Beck’s voice stuttered to a stop. Did Peter sound...upset? Hard to tell with the mask, but his voice definitely cracked. “I just helped you nab those guys, didn’t I?”

“Yeah?” Spider-man continued to advance. Cautiously. Slow. “You don’t do anything unless it benefits you. So, why the *hell* have you been jumping around town acting like you’re some sort of hero?”

“You noticed that?” Beck wasn’t flattered. He wasn’t.

“So, you wanted me to notice you?”

Beck took a step back for every step forward that Peter took. He had to stop thinking of him as Spider-man. They weren’t two separate entities anymore. They were one. And just the thought of Peter so close...Well, it did something to him. Made all his carefully constructed plans fall flat.

“It worked, didn’t it?”

He was flat against the brick now, and Peter wasn’t showing any sign of stopping. Beck could hear his angry and labored breaths; saw the way he balled his hand into a fist; took note of the way he hauled said fist back and—

Beck dodged the blow, and Peter’s fist crashed into the brick leaving behind an impressive crater. He whistled in appreciation, both at the witnessed strength, and that the blow didn’t land him square in the helmet.

“You’re really off your game.”

“Shut up.” Peter cradled his hand to his chest. It couldn’t have hurt him that bad, Beck knew he’d taken more damage than that. “Do you always have to be such an asshole?”

“I mean, yeah, it’s kinda my thing,” Beck smiled, he just wished Peter could at least see it.

“Whatever, man,” Peter mumbled, but what was that? Yeah, Beck detected some amusement. Maybe even fondness. “I’ve had a rough couple of weeks.”

And now—he was confiding in him? He must really be desperate. Strange, but Beck wasn’t one to look a gift horse in the mouth.

“Me too, kid. Shoot.”

“What?”

Beck shrugged. “What’s bothering you?”

Oh, these were dangerous waters. Getting Peter to talk about what was surely their failed relationship. But hell, maybe he could finally get some answers. He’d only spent countless days and nights lying awake trying to puzzle it out. Every possible explanation. Some absurd and some...scarily realistic.

Like, the notion that Peter knew exactly who he was.

But he never entertained that one long enough. Because that? That would mean Peter was really gone. And Peter was right here, as Spider-man, talking to him.

He could count that as a win.

“Are you insane?”

“It’s a word that’s been used. Why are you stalling?”

“I’m not stalling,” Peter said, definitely stalling. “It’s just, I don’t know. Sometimes you think you have it all figured out and then it turns out you don’t. You know?”

“Yeah,” Beck said on a breath. “Yeah, I get that.”

“Sometimes you think you love someone—” Peter stopped and turned abruptly. “I’m not doing this with you.”

Beck couldn’t help but feel a little angry. Hurt. Peter *thought* he loved him. Then woke up one day and decided he didn’t? Then left without a solid reason as to why.

Well, if he couldn’t tell Beck—he was going to have to tell Mysterio.

“So, relationship problems?” Beck asked, trying for light and not to let his personal interest shine through.

Peter spun around. “Don’t you have a magic show to perform?”

“Why, you want a ticket?”

Peter laughed, one that quickly dissolved into a groan as he buried his head in his hands. God, Beck wanted to comfort him. A hug, a firm pat on the back? Anything. But dressed as he was, he wouldn’t get anything more than a broken wrist. So, he settled for leaning against the wall, arms crossed deliberately across his chest. See? No tricks.

“So,” Beck pressed. “What’s eating at you?”

“Do you realize how ridiculous this is?” Peter asked. He didn’t leave though, finally sighing and running a hand along the back of his head. For a brief moment, Beck thought he might pull off the mask. “Why do you even care?”

Ah, that stung for reasons that Beck couldn’t explain.

“I’m feeling charitable,” he said, gesturing vaguely to the two perps dangling from the fire exit, probably more than a little confused as to what they were witnessing. “Or, was that not obvious?”

“So, what? You’re a good guy now?”

“Never,” Beck said quickly, and he could have sworn he heard a muffled chuckle in response. “But I’m not feeling much like being the bad guy today.”

“Right.” A long, drawn-out silence that could have been seconds, but felt like hours. “It’s like this. Sometimes you take up for someone, over and over again, and then they turn out to be exactly what you were warned against.”

Beck’s chest tightened.

“And that—” Peter continued. “That hurts because you wanted them to be wrong. You’ve been convinced that they were wrong. By yourself and by the other person. And, you just end up feeling like an idiot.”

“You’re not an idiot, kid.”

“Yeah,” Peter sighed, huffed out a depreciating noise. “I sort of am.”

“That makes two of us then.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah,” Beck breathed out. He felt, lighter? Strangely enough. A little put out, sure, that Peter was so easily talking to him as Mysterio when he couldn’t before. But still, there was that chance, that real chance, that Peter knew exactly who he was talking to now. “Sometimes being wrong about someone is just as bad as being right.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

Beck held out his hands in surrender at Peter’s defensive tone. “Hey, let me explain.”

“Shouldn’t really *let* you do anything,” Peter mumbled but didn’t do much beyond that. “Go ahead.”

“Sometimes you know someone is too good for you, then you find out you were right all along.”

The only noises that Beck can hear are the sirens and hustle of New York from outside the alley and the rush and ringing in his ears. It wasn’t a confession, not really, but Peter was smart. He could practically see him working things out beneath the mask.

Beck opened his mouth, snapping it shut when nearly called out Pete’s name. This thing happening right now was unspoken. They both knew the truth, and just like before, in the bedroom—neither of them wanted to say it out loud.

Funny what hiding behind a mask could do.

“Hey,” Peter said finally. “You should go home.”

Oh. That...that hadn’t been what he expected.

“Are you sure?” Beck asked; realized how strange that must sound. Time to strap on that false bravado to cover up the overwhelming sense of dread and finality. “Don’t you want to tie me up or something?”

“Maybe later,” Peter said, and he didn’t seem upset, only a little confused. He shot and pulled himself up the wall, dangling from the edge before pointing at the two still acting as unwilling witnesses. Beck had honestly forgotten about them. “Call the cops first, but yeah...Go home.”

Peter disappeared over the ledge and Beck was left standing there peering up at the sky.

Okay.

Alright.

“Sorry guys, I didn’t bring my phone.” He cloaked himself in a casual illusion and headed toward the street, ignoring the muffled plea he heard from the fire escape.

Something had shifted, he felt it.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Beck arrived back at his apartment with that weird feeling still in his chest.

It wasn't something he felt often, curled inside him and causing his heart to pound painfully against his ribcage.

Hope.

A stupid thing to have, but it was there. Peter had opened up to him. Well, to Mysterio, but also to him, indirectly as it was. He didn't want to hope, but he did. That Peter was working things out on his own. That there could be forgiveness in the works for him, even if it meant only being trusted from afar.

And, if that was the case, Beck was really going to have to work on Peter's hero-villain etiquette.

He wiggled his key in the lock a few times only to find it wasn't locked at all. He frowned and checked the edge of the door for any sign of a break-in, only to find nothing. Everything at ease. Almost as if someone had a key.

(Or, that he forgot to lock it behind him. Which, to be fair, was highly possible. His brain was a little scattered these days.)

And yet, he still knew what he would find when he opened the door. Not that it made it any more shocking to process.

"Peter," Beck breathed out, dropping his duffle bag and crossing the threshold in quick steps. Fast enough to meet Peter halfway in a desperate and needy embrace. Peter clung to him, and Beck clung right back. He buried his face in his hair, kissed the crown of his head. "God, kid. I missed you."

"Missed you too, old man," Peter muffled into the fabric of his shirt. Beck felt him smile against him, rubbing his head along his chest; making sure this was all real, just like Beck was.

Then he pulled back, eyebrows drawn together in worry, his lip tucked between his teeth.

"I need to tell you something."

"Pete, let me first."

"No," he cut off. "No, just—listen to me. Okay? If you want me to leave after, I get it. Trust me. I do. Just, I don't know...Give me a head start?"

Beck held him at arm's length, hands on his shoulders. He didn't really plan on letting him go anywhere, but he nodded anyway. "Shoot."

Peter took a deep breath, steeling himself, and closed his eyes. "I'm Spider-man."

All the drama clubs from his youth, all those off-Broadway plays that he performed in during his early twenties, all those acting classes, upon acting classes—all that experience vanished in an instant. Beck couldn't even pretend to be shocked.

Peter opened his eyes at the silence, tensed under Beck's hand like he expected to be hurled across the room. "Say something."

"I—" Beck stopped. He was tired of lying, right? "I know."

"You—you know? Wait," Peter stepped back, nostrils flared. "Is that...is that the only reason why? Was any of this real?"

"Kid, this is probably the realest thing I've got."

Peter's shoulders instantly sagged in relief and, god, if that didn't make Beck feel good. But something else hit him too. A confusing, but dawning realization as he watched Peter shift from foot to foot.

Why would Peter think he was pretending? What gain would it be for him, Quentin Beck? Unless.

"Okay, my turn." Beck swallowed hard. "I'm—"

"Yeah, I know," Peter whispered. Then he smiled, obviously forced and nervous. Just a little quirk of his mouth. "*Mysterio*."

Beck's stomach bottomed out, dizziness overtaking him. He felt his skin go hot, and then cold, and then clammy. The charade was up. Everything was out there.

The final punchline to this cosmic joke.

"How'd you—?" Beck scrubbed a hand down his face. "*When* did you know?"

Though, he was pretty sure he knew the answer to the latter. A brief flash of Peter crying and kissing him, crawling on top of him and the holding him like it was the last time. Spectacular goodbye sex. Fuck. It all made sense, even if deep down, he'd always known.

"Did you really think I wouldn't recognize my own boyfriend's tech?" Peter asked, eyebrows raised. "How many days did I spend with you in the lab messing around with that stuff? At first, I thought, I don't know, that you were selling unauthorized weaponry, but...then you slipped."

"Slipped?"

"You called me *kid*," Peter lamented, "and, well, I heard *you*, not *Mysterio*."

"Oh," Beck said lamely.

"I wanted to be wrong. I wanted to come home and find you here but—"

"You didn't."

"No, I didn't. I was afraid that I'd messed you up really bad. Jesus, I *had* messed you up really bad. On multiple occasions."

Beck shrugged and offered him a self-deprecating smile. "It was probably warranted."

"It was *definitely* warranted. But then I realized," Peter stopped, cast his eyes downward, voice small when he spoke again. "I realized that we couldn't be together. Spider-man couldn't come home to *Mysterio*."

Just like that, the tightness in his throat and chest was back. He'd thought, maybe, since Peter had

come home that it meant...Fuck. Beck pressed his palms against his eyes, hard until he saw stars. He was right, of course. It was never going to work. Peter knew it. He knew it. Wasn't that why he tried to end it that first night? With his hand on Peter's throat.

But he didn't. He couldn't.

He loved Peter.

Beck spun around to face him; hadn't realized he'd even turned around, or that he was tugging at his own hair, or that his eyes were blurry. Peter just stared at him with a sad and hopeful little smile.

"I was thinking though," Peter said, suddenly demure. He took a step forward, smoothed the collar of Beck's button-up and let his hands rest there against the slow rise and fall of his chest. "Maybe I could still come home to Quentin?"

Beck raised shaky hands to Peter's face, hesitating before cupping his cheeks in his hands, thumbs rubbing at the soft skin. He needed the reassurance that this wasn't just another illusion. Because those words? They couldn't be real.

He didn't deserve them.

Peter reached up, wrapped a hand around his wrist. He didn't pull him away, only kept him grounded there, closing his eyes and leaning into the warmth of Beck's palm.

"You'd want that?" Beck's voice cracked. "Peter, you know what I am."

"Yeah, I do."

"Then you have to know—"

"I know *you*," Peter interjected, "not Mysterio."

"I *am* Mysterio. Pete, I've done bad things. You know that. Hell, you know that probably better than anyone."

"Yeah, I know you've done good things too."

Beck snorted a laugh.

"I'm serious," Peter pressed, giving him a teasing slap to his chest. "You spent all week doing my job for me."

God, if only it were that easy. A little do-good here and there didn't wash his hands clean. He had to respect Peter's unrelenting optimism though. The kid had a heart of gold and all he had was a cracked moral compass. What a pair they made.

Beck sighed. "That doesn't change much, kiddo."

"Listen," Peter's brow furrowed. "I spent weeks agonizing over this. I didn't leave May's. I barely slept. I barely ate. The whole city went to shit because I couldn't stop thinking about it. I saw you sometimes, around town, getting coffee and going about your business. I don't know, I thought maybe you'd moved on. And I realized—I didn't want that."

"What *do* you want?"

"You," Peter said with finality. "I want you."

Well, Beck couldn't argue with that.

Peter rocked forward and pressed his mouth, hot and hungry, against Beck's lips. It sent a shiver up his spine, set a flame low in his gut. His hands moved from Peter's face to the back of his neck, running up into his hair to tug lightly, just the way Beck knew he liked it.

"I want you so bad," Peter murmured, less innocent than before. His fingers twisted into the front of Beck's shirt and with that unnerving strength of his, he ripped it clean open. Buttons flew and fabric tore, and Beck couldn't be bothered to give a damn that it'd been one of his favorites.

"Yeah?" Words weren't coming easily to him; his brain just short-circuiting at the very notion. Hearing how much Peter wanted him always set him off. Like he never really believed it, needing to hear it over and over again. "You got me, kid."

"I know."

To prove his point, Peter got hands on his shoulders, hauling himself up to wrap his legs around Beck's waist. The weight startled him, but he was quick to recover, reaching down to grab two firm handfuls of Peter's ass. Peter laughed against his mouth in between alternating chaste and hungry kisses.

"God, I missed you."

"You didn't even come looking for me," Peter teased, there was no real hurt in it. No real malice. He clearly knew that he left making it very clear he didn't want to be followed.

Beck carried them through the living room, the path set only by muscle-memory because his eyes couldn't be bothered to tear away from the face so close to him, overwrought with relief and fondness. Peter's fingers carded through his hair, along the scruff of his cheek. Appreciative little touches that made the cold in Beck's chest melt.

"Don't think May would have liked me showing up with flowers," he joked, dropping Peter down on the empty bed and crawling over him. Couldn't really stand to be apart from him for too long; not after all this.

"You're—*ahhh*—probably right," Peter whined as Beck kissed up his neck, stopping to suck at that patch below his ear that never failed to make him squirm. Those hips, petite in size but not strength, bucked up, grinding up and searching for something Beck was all too eager to give. "Oh, god, Quentin."

Beck snaked a hand between them, finding Peter's already firming cock to give it a teasing squeeze. "I'm Quentin again?"

"*Ahhh*, you're an asshole is what you are," Peter groaned, rocking into his palm. He let out a gasp and smiled wickedly. That was never good. "Want me to go further back? *Sir?*"

"Kid," Beck warned. He was already about three seconds away from losing it and he owed Peter a proper time. "Don't do this to me."

"Or, maybe," Peter bit at his bottom lip, a mock-expression too sultry to be shy, "*Mr. Beck?*"

"Keep it up." Beck squeezed again, another warning, massaging through the denim. A bit cruel, on both of their accounts, knowing how bad they both wanted it.

And, because he was feeling merciful, Beck unbuttoned Peter's pants one-handed and tugged.

"Beautiful." Beck's eyes roamed over Peter's body. His exposed midriff, his slender hips, and hard cock. Everything about him small but oh, so very powerful. It drove Beck crazy, and then some.

"Don't have to flatter me," Peter panted, but he was already angling up and practically begging to be touched. Beck knew he didn't have to, but he also knew Peter liked a little praise. He got a hand around him, squeezing just hard enough that Peter arched against him. "Quentin, *please*."

"What do you need, honey?" Beck stroked him firm but slow, not enough to sate.

Peter's lips trembled before the damn broke. "I need you," he gasped, fucking up in Beck's fist. "I've always needed you. I know—I know that I shouldn't," Peter choked back a sob.

"Hey, hey," Beck shushed him quietly. It was easy to pretend that this was all going to work out, that the reality of it wouldn't always linger in the back of the room. But, hell, if Peter needed him half as bad as he needed Peter? They'd figure it out. "It's gonna be fine. I got you."

Peter closed his eyes and nodded, and Beck leaned down to kiss at his forehead, his cheek, his lips. His hand resumed that steady stroke. This time with purpose, with all the little tricks that he knew Peter liked. "I got you," he repeated in a hushed whisper. "I got you."

Peter came over his hand in a silent cry, fingers gripping and pulling at Beck's shoulders. Beck worked him through it until he felt soft in his hand, body twitching and shunning from overstimulation. He leaned down, kissed him soundly, and it was everything to hear Peter's content sigh in return.

"That wasn't so hard, was it?"

"Shut up," Peter mumbled but didn't sound the least bit put out. His lips quirked in a coy grin and he slapped at Beck's chest, prompting him to roll over until he was flat on his back. "I know something that is."

Beck groaned, rolling his eyes. *Jesus*, the kid was corny.

Then Peter's hands found that hard *something* and Beck groaned for a different reason. Then Peter was smiling smugly and slipping to the floor to position himself between Beck's open legs, hands roaming with splayed fingers up to the tops of his thighs until they reached his waistband.

"C'mon, Pete, you're killing me here."

"Too soon."

Beck laughed that time, inappropriate as it was given the circumstances, and pretty soon Peter was too.

"Okay," he wheezed, "okay. Let me, here—" Peter licked his lips and leaned up over the ledge of the bed to work the fastenings of Beck's pants, sliding them down off his hips. This wasn't going to last long. Not with Peter taking him in hand and eyeing his cock like it was a meal.

Peter darted his tongue out, licked a hot stripe up the underside before taking the head into his mouth.

Beck's head fell back against the mattress. Okay, maybe it *was* a meal.

And, oh god, Peter was hungry. He sucked, and licked, and pulled off to give sloppy kisses along the tip. Worked what he couldn't fit in that tight throat with his hand, and pretty soon it had Beck struggling to keep from thrusting shallowly up into it.

Beck breathed heavy through gritted teeth, his nostrils flared, and his hair mussed up and sticking with sweat to his forehead. A goddamn mess. That's what he was.

"Kid, you're gonna make me come," Beck hissed out in warning; like that wasn't *exactly* what Peter was aiming to do. Proven when he doubled down his efforts, taking him deeper and nearly choking on it. And, well, that shouldn't exactly edge him closer but he's only a man.

A low, guttural moan was all the warning he gave Peter before his hips twitched one last time, and Peter was swallowing him down like a champ. He pulled off in one gasping breath, wiping the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand, and looking entirely too proud with himself.

Beck hated he found it adorable.

"C'mere."

Peter obeyed, crawling up on the bed, his pants still half to his knees, Beck in not much better shape. They looked ridiculous; all things considered. Luckily, Beck also was painfully aware of how good they looked together too.

Peter laid his head on his chest, snuggling closer up under Beck's arm. "Hey, can I ask you something?"

"Shoot."

"Did you really not know that I knew?" Peter sat up, just a little, enough to eye him suspiciously.

"No, how was I supposed to know? I was a bit blind-sided, kiddo."

"Wait—" Peter twisted up, looking down at him with disbelief and, what Beck could only guess, insult. "You *really* thought that I was just going to spill my guts to *Mysterio* not knowing exactly who was underneath that dumb fishbowl?"

Beck blinked up at him, two seconds of flat expression before his façade finally cracked in laughter. "You make a good argument."

"Quentin, you're one of the smartest people I've ever met— No, stop laughing. It's true," Peter huffed with feigned irritation, clamping a hand over Beck's mouth to muffle it. "But you are so, so stupid sometimes."

Well, he couldn't really argue with that. Beck bit at his palm anyway.

"Yeah," he sighed, "yet here you are."

Peter settled back beneath his arm, cuddling close. "Here I am."

It felt right. Everything. All the heartbreak from the past weeks fading in the background. Peter was right; Beck was stupid about a lot of things, especially when it came to his emotions and expressing them, but he wasn't so naïve to think this wasn't going to come with hardships. Ones they'd never really faced before.

"You really think we can make this work?"

“Yeah,” Beck assured him. Confident to quell that hint of anxiety he detected in Peter’s voice. “I mean, if Spider-man can make spandex work, anything is possible.”

Peter shoved him, groaning through a giggle. “I hate you.”

“No. You don’t.”

“I guess not.”

Beck angled his head down, met Peter in a press of lips. It was a soft and chaste kiss, the kind where it was just enough to feel close; warm and perfect. Eclipsing any and every doubt that resided in the back of his mind.

Peter pulled away, lips shining with that snarky smile. “Still hate your cape though.”

God, he loved him.

Chapter End Notes

I really hope that I cleared everything up?? I thought I had laid down clues and I'm sorry that so many people ended up confused. :) I didn't intend for that to happen! But, hey, it's Beck's POV and he's kinda a confusing mess, so I get it! Thank you all for your comments and support. The next chapter will be probably up tomorrow, and just a short epilogue with a glimpse into how things work out. <3

Epilogue

[five years later]

Beck slammed his head back against the wall. His helmet was gone, tossed somewhere to the side in the scuffle. He struggled against his bonds; hands webbed together above his head. Funny how he kept ending up like this.

“Give up?”

“Where’s the fun in that?”

Peter, in all his costumed glory, swung to land artfully in front of him. Show off, always had been. At least that didn’t change. He stood, feet straddling Beck’s thighs, hands cocked on his hips. Even with the mask, that insufferable smirk shined through.

“Oh,” Peter said, gaze tilting down toward Beck’s lap, where his own bodysuit was doing nothing to hide the unmistakable bulge. “Is that for me?”

Beck wasn’t exactly proud of how much that wound him up, but well, he was only a man. And Peter was still compact, slim muscle on a lean figure and damnit, if he didn’t look *good*. Especially when he dropped to his knees, settling right on his lap.

Fuck.

“Really surprised you didn’t go with something cheesier,” Beck grunted out, trying to shift his weight, which only caused Peter to grind down teasingly on his cock. Oh, he was going to be the death of him. Truly.

“Like,” Peter cleared his voice, pitched it a couple of octaves lower. “Is that an illusion in your pants? Or are you just happy to see me?”

Beck groaned, happy that his helmet was discarded so that Peter could see his eye roll. “You’re the worst.”

“I think that’s you.”

Beck tugged at the webbed bindings again, giving him a feral grin. “You love it though.”

Peter leaned forward, taking Beck’s chin in hand, tilting his gaze up. With his other hand, he tugged on his mask until only the lower half of his face was exposed. Beck’s breath hitched and Peter licked his lips. “Time for your punishment—”

“Wait,” Beck said, trying to lean up and look over Peter’s shoulder, which prompted him to do the same. There was an added pressure on his legs, one that wasn’t coming from Peter.

A squirming pressure. Warm, heavy, and panting. Brindle-coated.

“Quentin, I thought you locked her out!”

Dolly barked, her tail wagging, like this was all some sort of game. And well, it was, technically, but not one that Beck particularly wanted to play with their dog present. Still, when he’d tried to usher her in her kennel, she’d looked up at him with those big, sad eyes and—

“You try telling that face no,” Beck reasoned.

The illusion dropped around them. What was once a grimy back alley shimmered and faded into their bedroom. Spider-man’s costume, Mysterio’s armor—both vanished to leave Beck and Peter in their underwear. The webbing that bound Beck’s wrists to the headboard, unfortunately, stayed intact. Peter had insisted that be real for, well, reasons...

“Little help here?”

“Oh, right,” Peter laughed. He ripped it off in one swift motion, like the stuff was made of wet paper, then rolled off Beck’s lap and slapped the space between them for Dolly to join. “C’mon, girl.”

She wiggled her way up, happy to greet them with sloppy, wet kisses and a thumping tail. Peter took her face in his hands, squishing up her jowls playfully. All at once, Beck’s heart was filled with an overwhelming sense of contentment.

“Yeah, pretty hard face to say no to.”

“Raincheck?”

“Yeah,” Peter sighed happily, turning to lean his head on Beck’s shoulder. Then, teasing, “I’ll get you one day, Mysterio.”

“Not a chance, kid.”

It was a strange life, but it was theirs.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!